Castlemaine Naturalist

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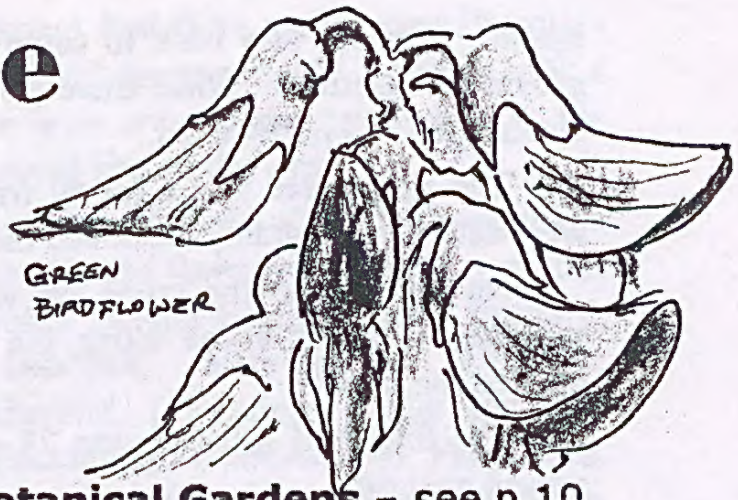

Sat. Oct.11. Planting in Botanical Gardens – see p.10

Newhaven, July 2003

CFNC Camp

After 6 months of planning, 11 club members spent 4 nights at the Birds Australia property "Newhaven". Ann and Hans, Gill and Margaret, Robyn and Bill, Nina and John drove to Alice Springs and met Helen and Chris, and Stan, who had flown/trained to Alice Springs.

Newhaven's northern boundary is very close to the Tropic of Capricorn and the West MacDonell Range is to the south. High rocky bluffs and a gorge, salt lakes and sandy ridges are features of the landscape. We visited the property at a water-stressed time when the only surface water is from the bores. Even so, we did see some flowering:

Frankenia cordata (Sea Heath)
Grevillea wickhamii (Holly Grevillea)
Hakea eyreana (Fork-leafed Corkwood)
Ptilotus helipteroides (Hairy Mulla Mulla)
Cassia nemophila (Dessert Cassia) (now *Senna*)
Acacia spondylophylla (Curry Wattle)
Crotalaria cunninghamii (Green Birdflower)

The weather was fine and cold – one morning it was -3° C inside the Manager's cabin.

Our last fuel stop prior to Newhaven was Tilmouth Well Roadhouse (138.9 cents per litre!). John and I looked at the gallery of Aboriginal art and wondered if lilac really was appropriate among the strident earthy colours of the outback. The vista of the salt lake surface covered by *Frankenia cordata* and the distant Western 'Macs' proved the artists correct. The roads were a challenge to both drivers and vehicles with sandy patches and badly corrugated sections.

A day trip to Lake Bennett provided the men with the challenge of walking to the ever distant water's edge. They were like Burke and Wills, King and Grey without camels! They did return after exploring "Stan's

Island". On our way back to camp we stopped to look at the sand ridge groves of casurinas. While there Robyn spotted a very large nest that was cup-shaped and neatly lined.

The gorge area was a lovely walk with beautiful ghost gums. Wrens were active in the grassy creek bed there.

On our trip to the bores we were led by a dingo – a very healthy specimen - pacing ahead along the road. On the final day their howls greeted the sunrise.

The final bird roll call was 29 species – let's hope better conditions prevail next time.

Nina Cole

A Haven for Naturalists

Eleven members of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club met up at Newhaven in July, despite various mechanical setbacks while there or in getting there from Alice Springs along the Tanamai Track and then the Mount Wedge/Newhaven Station road. Really, road is too grand a description – bits of 4WD tend to fall off or come adrift on the corrugations and sand drifts in places, and it would be a grave mistake to believe the blurbs claiming that a conventional 2WD sedan can manage the trip in. Whoever wrote that must have been a hopeless optimist!

Still, it's worth the five hours drive to be in camp, given that the property manager, Ian, saved the day in vehicle refits.

The red earth, the Ghost Gums, the Spinifex clumps, the sentinels of Desert Oaks, twisted Corkwoods, Tessellated Bloodwoods, Mulga woodlands and the distant ranges standing out golden in the setting sun gives it a quality beyond description; it makes one think it's not the canvas but rather the land itself that has been painted.

It may be near-desert but this is no empty quarter when you start looking at shrubs and animal tracks. Acacias, cassias, saltbush, grevilleas, mulla-mulla, brachycomes, eremophila, crotalaria, thryptomene were easier to identify but other things took longer. The sad thing was that after two years of next to no rain the country looked stressed, and there was no doubt the birds we had expected had departed until things got better. Talking to Desert Park people back in Alice Springs confirmed that birds in numbers had moved back into the quartzite/sandstone hills of the Macdonell Ranges from the sandy desert due to the availability of more reliable water and seeds.

Incidentally, if time is not of the essence and you want to break the journey, going in or out, there are very comfortable cabins and an excellent table with gourmet meals at Tilmouth Wells roadhouse at the halfway mark. There we met the President of Birds Australia, and our bird list improved

immediately so as not to let the side down! And there are Princess Parrots – bad luck - in an aviary. Stan, regaled us with his experience when he took a short cut during the night across the lawn area to the toilets just as the sprinkler system switched on and showered him all the way.

Well, what about the Birds? Out of a bird list of 140 for the area, taken in good times, we could only claim near 40; and there were not many rarities in this. Perhaps the best sightings would include Black-breasted Buzzard, Crimson Chat, Grey-crowned Babblers, Slaty-backed Thornbill, Grey-fronted Honeyeater, Pied Butcherbird, Cockatiels, Mulga and Port Lincoln Parrots, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, White-winged Fairy-wren, Red-capped Robin. No, we didn't sight the Night Parrot, so fame escaped us

We did all the outposts such as the Mesa, the Gorge, Camel Bore and, yes, there were feral Camels in the vicinity and we counted 5 Dingoes for the trip. The camping ground and the company was great. A memorable picture we are left with is Stan striding back across the Lake Bennett salt lake mirage in the company of John, Hans and Bill.

Helen Morris

Group benefits

Ann van Gemert didn't write an article for us but she gave me permission to summarise some of the things we were discussing re the Campout.

Most of the group travelled up together, travelling separately during the day but meeting up at night. There they shared observations, reference books, and tips for the following day from those who'd travelled that way before, or who had been told of special places by other travellers.

A very important part of outback travel is to make sure that everything needed is done beforehand, spares carried etc., but even then things can go wrong, and one morning John and Nina found Hans and Ann by the side of the road with the bonnet up, so they stopped to help. John and Hans went back the 63kms (mobile phones don't work out there) to get the RAC, while Ann and Nina stayed with the car.

On another occasion three couples in two of the vehicles decided to go down the Strezlecki track to Montecolina Bore and the Painted Desert. Later that day they realized that the spare wheel was missing off the van Gemert camper trailer, and after thinking about it Hans realized that it must be down the rough track to the bore, so back he and Bill went, 40kms, and sure enough, it was still where it had come adrift. When they got back to the others feeling very tired and fed up they were greeted with a glass of wine each. Spirits were restored, and the bonds grew amongst the group. One of the things that Ann appreciated so much was that the group grew very close and helped and supported each other.

On the way to Newhaven from Alice Springs Chris and co. struck

trouble with their rented 4WD, and again there was lots of offers to help and the ranger at Newhaven came to the rescue that time.

One of Ann's special memories of Stan was the stories he told. They had to take their own water in with them, so bath water was rationed - ankle deep in a bowl. Stan related how it reminded him of the days on the farm when he was a boy and water was scarce. His mother used to tell him to stand in the dish, water to his ankles, and wash "from the top down as far as possible, then from the bottom up as far as possible, and then possible".

Ann felt the camp was a wonderful experience, and we should have more of them!

I'm sure I speak for all the travellers, and the would-have-been travellers, when I say a big "Thank you and congratulations, Margaret." Your suggestion for the trip and your organisation made it real winner.

Rita Mills

On Owls

A fascinating article on owls in the July issue of Australian Geographic magazine explains how "they are not equipped to digest the bones or fur of their prey, but regurgitate them in compact pellets. If undisturbed these remains pile up under roost sites and provide graphic evidence of owl diets. For instance, a Sooty Owl site in a cave in the Blue Mountains NSW, has a pile of pellets and animal remains accumulated over thousands of years. Some animals represented in the midden no longer exist in the area."

This article gave cause to reflect that it is now 10 years since we became aware of the pair of Southern Boobooks in our local Botanic Gardens. I first heard of them from Geoff Hannon in 1993, and our son Harry – a Research Associate at the Australian Museum in Sydney – visited the site to recover some pellets, and discovered they contained the bones of a bat. At his enthusiastic suggestion I made regular visits and collected pellets for analysis, on a weekly basis when possible. At times there were pathetic yellow beaks of Blackbirds among the remains, so for that period the pellets were also examined for both mammal and bird bones. (The Blackbird population has declined over the years, needless to say!)

Positive identification of the owls became necessary of course, as there had been one or two reports of Barking Owls in the area, and there are similarities. Ornithologist Charlie Silveira kindly brought along a tape of Barking Owl calls, which we played beside the tree one evening as a challenge, but to the complete indifference of the owl in residence at the time, as observed by torch light.

Next came DNA testing of a feather – finally achieved in 1999, with a positive result.

Over the years as the number of walkers in the gardens have increased and the tree has become a favourite of visiting dogs, it has been increasingly difficult to sort out owl pellets – often fragmented – from dog and possum droppings, and not particularly agreeable! But it is surprising, and heart warming, to discover just how many friends and well wishes regularly visit the tree - including garden staff.

The owls have been very consistent in their habits – usually moving elsewhere at the conclusion of the breeding season in November, when the thinning foliage of the cypress tree becomes inadequate against the summer sun and aggressive cockatoos, and returning in March or April. Apart from accidental deaths, owls mate for life and they live for decades – at least 60 years in the case of Powerful Owls.

August-September is breeding season and they come and go until the female has settled into the nest – presumably a hollow in a nearby tree, which one I have never been able to discover. There are occasional reports of young owls found dead on the roads nearby, or around the gardens - it is difficult to assess the survival rate. Last summer the family (two young) stayed around – possibly because of the mouse plague in the gardens – but moved to the plantation of huge old cypresses nearby. I have been told that long term observations of owls are rare (except in captivity), so the survival of our birds is important, and I feel sure their chosen home will help to ensure success.

Shirley Parnaby

Moonlight Delights in the Grampians – 5/9/03

We had arrived in the Grampians after dark and were sitting in the living room when we heard several taps at the window – thinking it might be Daisy (our resident Red-necked Wallaby) we investigated and were surprised to see one Echidna followed closely by a second one! We watched from our side of the glass as they made their way around the front of the house. We were further amazed to see them mate outside the third window pane. They mated for approximately 5 minutes before being disturbed by a third Echidna (presumably a large male?) which approached from the same direction! The three Echidnas then moved on to the next window where they stopped to drink at the pond before waddling off further around the house still tapping at the window (and possibly their own reflections) as they went. Five or so minutes later one of them returned, retracing his steps around the house and reinvestigating the reflections in the window, before moving back into the moonlit bush from where he had come.

Shortly afterwards Daisy appeared with this season's beautiful, bold and very relaxed little joey hanging out of her pouch – our first sight of what has 'til now been a growing, moving lump in her pouch! What a cutie!

PS: When I finally reached Mum, who was at the Castlemaine FN meeting,

we realised that we must have been witnessing one of the Echidna trains that occur at this time of the year when they go searching for mates - thanks to last month's article by Nina and John Cole!

Natasha Harris

Tool-making Crows

I was quite intrigued by an article from a Western Australian newspaper which someone sent me as I had, just the day before, read a very similar story in one of the Nature Strips in the winter edition of Nature Australia. It concerns a colony of New Caledonian Crows which has become very adept in not only using, but fashioning, simple tools. A captive crow at Oxford University was used in a series of laboratory tests. In one experiment she was given a piece of wire, which she twisted into a hook with her beak so that she could fish her food out of a bucket which had been hidden in a piece of pipe. Apparently the people who carried out the experiments got the idea when her mate had stolen a hook that had been made for her to fish morsels from a tube, and she was forced to make her own tools to get her food.

In the wild the New Caledonian Crows use and manufacture gadgets from a number of articles, including pandanus leaves, twigs and barbed leaves.

A number of birds and animals use simple tools but the researchers are inclined to think that: "The complexity of their tool kit proves these unassuming birds have perhaps the greatest cognitive capabilities of all non-human animals."

Rita Mills

On Mount Tamborine

During our recent visit to Brisbane to see our daughter and her family, we decided to visit some friends who have a restaurant on Mt. Tamborine, which is about an hour and a half from where we were staying. Prior to moving to Queensland, Harold was a landscape gardener, and since taking over the restaurant he has transformed the garden, removing much of the thick undergrowth and installing paths and clearings. The National Park is just outside the back gate, so there is plenty of rainforest close by.

In the garden Harold has installed a feeding station where the birds are regularly fed, and so the patrons are able to obtain a close-up view of the feathered visitors. For the first time I was able to get a really good view of a Regent Bower-bird with its striking yellow and black plumage; I had previously only managed fleeting glimpses at O'Reilly's and Binnaburra. For some years Harold had had a Satin Bower-bird nesting in the garden, with its bower tucked in under the shrubbery, but unfortunately it has not been seen recently. For this Harold blames residents moving into the area and bringing with them cats. There is also a Cockatoo which was probably a family pet but which is now on the loose, but which terrorises some of the patrons, and

has to be chased away.

Some of the shrubs were in flower and the Spinebills and Leeuwin Honeyeaters were very busy among the blossoms. For my benefit Harold put out some food on the feeding tray and within seconds there was a flock of chattering, screeching Rainbow Lorikeets. Harold believes that they maintain a spotting system so that if any spotter espies food in the vicinity, the message is immediately relayed to the rest of the flock. He told me of a Currawong which was unable to get at the food, so it seized a Lorikeet by the wing and threw it away, then repeated the manoeuvre until it had sufficient room to get through to the food.

Because the restaurant has large glass walls, there is a problem of birds bumping into the glass and becoming stunned temporarily. Harold has noticed that at times when this has happened to Red-rumped Firetails, and they have been lying on the path, stunned, sometimes a Leeuwin Honeyeater will come along and nudge them off the path and under the leaves of the shrubbery until they recover. This I would have liked to have seen but there were no Firetails present on the day of our visit.

Our daughter still has a resident Scrub Turkey much to her disgust, as it wrecks the garden while it rakes all the available mulch material down to the bottom corner of the block. One day we did a very unkind thing. We obtained a sheet of plastic which we used to cover over the nest pile to exclude the bird. When last seen it was busily scratching itself a pile in the garden next door. However this strategy has been tried before, but the bird was able to scratch through the plastic and resume its nest building. We wait to see what will happen this time.

George Broadway

Sri Lanka's Birds – Stuart Dashper – 12/9/03

Stuart fortunately gets to go on reconnaissance trips with his wife who runs Birding Worldwide tours. His address this month is based on their recent trip to Sri Lanka.

We travelled with Stuart from the Wilpattu N.P. to Lion Rock at Sigiriya (Hoopoo, Peregrine Falcon, Orange-headed Thrush, Green Imperial Pigeon, Indian Cuckoo). Then we moved to the central mountains and the tea plantations to the Horton Plains Park (Sri Lankan Blue Whistler Thrush, Woodpecker, Blackbird, Hill Swallow). Moving down further onto the plains we visited the very endangered Sinharaja Forest Reserve which dates from 3rd Century BC (Mountain Hawk Eagle, Cattle Egret, Pied/Jacobean Cuckoo, Asian Open-billed Storks, Peacocks, Red-wattle Blackwings). And the Yala N.P. is apparently a must for a stop over (Pelicans, White-breasted Waterhen, Painted Stork, Chestnut-headed Green Bee-eater, Sri Lankan Jungle-fowl, Indian Pitta, Indian Nightjar). At Tissamaharama there was an abundance of birds at the large water tanks (White-throated Kingfisher, Cormorants, Rose-ringed Parakeets, Brown Fish-owls, Yellow, Cinnamon

and Black Bittens, Weavers). We also saw elephants, deer, crocodiles, monkeys, and beautiful pitcher plants!

Apparently there are 230 species of birds that breed in Sri Lanka (30-40 of these are endemic) and January is the best time to see them. "Newhaveners" what are you waiting for?

Geraldine Harris

Observations

• Rita Mills has sighted a White-throated Treecreeper in her garden for the first time in 4-5 years. Several frogs species have been calling from the dam opposite.

• Gill King has been watching inter-species aerial displays between Little Eagles and Brown Falcons. From her window, Gill has also seen a Little Eagle take off with a rabbit in its talons.

• Among a number of interesting finds in her vegetable garden, Natalie de Marcus has found a piece of fossil-bearing stone. One can easily discern a shell and vegetable matter but it is difficult to know whether the piece is local or not.

• Moth Orchids *Diuris chryseopsis*, and Leopard Orchids *Diuris pardina*, are appearing on James Track in the Smiths Reef forest. Penny Garnett

• Richard Piesse had a good close view of a Wedge-tailed Eagle just 10 metres away, near Mt. Franklin. He watched four Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring over Mt. Blackwood and, in the Blackwood township, he saw a couple of Gang Gang Cockatoos.

• Robyn van Smeerdijk has seen a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, White-eared Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebills and New Holland Honeyeaters in her garden.

• Scores and scores of Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) are in flower in the bush at Glenluce. This is many weeks later than last year. Richard Piesse

• George Broadway has at last sighted some of the Black Cockatoos that have been bombing his friends with pine cones – on the ridge where we have been pulling broom. A Horsefield's Cuckoo appeared on the first day of September and their resident garden Blue-tongue Lizard has emerged.

• Phee Broadway noted that a family of five Blue-tongue Lizards in their garden appeared to range from very bold to very shy – the bold ones got eaten by a kookaburra - possibly the shy ones are still there today?

• Two Echidnas have been sheltering behind some pieces of Messmate Stringybark leaning against each other in a friend's backyard. Bruce Donaldson

(As echidnas are usually solitary animals, but form trains to search for females at this time of the year, it would be interesting to get a further report from Bruce on the movements of these two animals.)

• Some rounded leaves that were first noted about mid-August in the bush at Campbells Creek finally flowered at the beginning of September and

revealed that they belong to the Gnat/Mosquito Orchid, *Cyrtostylis reniformis*. At Barkers Creek abundant Golden Moths *Diuris chryseopsis*, Dwarf Greenhoods *Pterostylis nana* and a single Blue Caladenia *Cyanicula* (was *Caladenia) caerulea* are flowering. Geraldine Harris

• Many trees have fallen since the rain started this year. It was suggested to me that perhaps during the dry years the roots have begun to die, and when the ground has softened the dead roots have not been able to hold the weight of the tree any more, and it has come crashing down.. A possible explanation? Rita Mills

• Geoff Harris watched two White's Thrushes fossicking around a disintegrating fallen tree in his bush paddock at Barker's Creek.

• Chris Morris described a "wave of birds" visiting his birdbath. There were Yellow Faced Honeyeaters, New Holland Honeyeaters, Silvereyes, Brown Thornbills, Willie Wagtail and Grey Fantail.

• Maggie Oliver was surprised to see a Red Wattlebird attempting to bath in her birdbath even though it was iced over!

• Richard Piesse reported 2 Echidnas on Mt. Alexander – one in the Koala Park and one close to the southern end of the West Ridge Walking Track.

• A Yellow-billed Spoonbill and a Little Pied Cormorant have been visiting Richard Piesse's dam over the fortnight before the business meeting.

Wednesday Evening Wildflower Walk (1) – 17/9/03.

Leader: Athol Dorman.

Thanks to the wonderful publicity (with our own glamorous cover girl!) in the local paper, 28 people turned out for the first Spring walk of 2003! Athol had chosen well and our two stops in the Kalimna Park bushland proved to be very productive. Plants that were flowering included: Gold-dust wattle *Acacia acinacea*, Rough Wattle *Acacia aspera*, Spreading wattle *Acacia genistifolia*, Gorse Bitter-pea *Daviesia ulcifolia*, Fairy Wax-flower *Philotheca verrucosa*, Billy Buttons *Craspedia variabilis*, Common Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioicia*, Pink-bells *Tetratheca ciliata*, White Marianth *Rhytidosporum procumbens*, Bushy Needlewood *Hakea decurrens ssp physocarpa*, Purple Coral-pea *Hardenbergia violacea*, Common Wood-rush *Lazula meridionalis*, Downy Grevillea or Cats Claws *Grevillea alpina*, Grevillea *Grevillea rosmarinifolia x alpina*, Leopard Orchid *Diuris pardina*, Slender Rice-flower *Pimilea linifolia*, Pale Sundew *Drosera peltata*, Scented Sundew *Drosera whittakerii*, Urn Heath *Melichrus urceolatis*, and Pink Fingers *Caladenia carnea.* Geraldine Harris

Wednesday Evening Wildflower walk (2) - 24/9/03

Leader: Margaret Panter

Once again dark clouds threatened as we gathered at the Octopus but dispersed once we were on the road and even before we had reached the Muckleford Historical Reserve we had noted Cut-leaf Daisies *Brachyscome*

multifida blooming on the road's edge. The following flowers were recorded this week:
Blue Caladenia, Fairy Wax-flower, Gold-dust Wattle, Gorse Bitter-pea, White Marianth, Wax-lip Orchid *Glossodia major*, Pink Fingers *Caladenia carnea var. carnea*, Pink-bells, Slender Rice-flower, Leopard Orchid, Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha*, Bitter Cryptandra *Cryptandra amara*, Dwarf Greenhood *Pterostylis nana*, +Cootamundra Wattle *Acacia baileyana*, Nodding Greenhood *Pterostylis nutans*, Purple Coral-pea, Common Beard-heath *Leucopogon virgatus*, Downy Grevillea or Cats Claws, Small-flowered Grevillea *Grevillea micrantha* (in bud), Yam Daisy *Microseris sp. 3*, Spreading Wattle, Tall Greenhood *Pterostylis melagramma*, Blue-beard Caladenia or Blue Fairies *Petalochilus deformis*, Sticky Everlasting *Xerochrysum viscosum*, Dusky Fingers *Petalochilus fuscatus*, Tangled Guinea-flower *Hibbertia exutaicies*, Rough Wattle, Common Everlasting *Chrysocephalum apiculatum sp agg.*

Geraldine Harris

FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING 25/9/03

Buda Garden Expo – Sunday Nov.2 or for whole expo Nov. 1-4
The Club has been invited to put on a display. We will finalise ideas at next Business meeting. Any offers of suitable material to Rita Mills.
The next **Australian National Network** Get-together, including pre and post tours, will be held in Perth, Sept. 22 - Oct. 8 2004.
Sat. Oct.11. – 8.30am Planting in Botanical Gardens – The Tussock Grass to be planted will be obtained from Jenni Collier. Bring gloves, tools etc. It is anticipated that it should take no more than a couple of hours.

Welcome to new members - George and Pauline Reid, Taradale, Bruce and Amanda Donaldson, Kerrie and Noela Cain, Castlemaine.

Roadside Conservation Project
The Club has been successful in obtaining a Community grant from Threatened Species Network in partnership with the Mount Alexander Shire Council for the purpose of "Locating and protecting threatened (native plant) species on local roadsides"
A project co-ordinator has been selected and, subject to finalising liability provisions, the appointment will to take effect immediately and run for twelve months with an extension if necessary to allow completion in December 2004.
The financial administration and management of funds will be undertaken by the Shire with the Club being recompensed for contributory expenses in the field involving resource skills and revegetation activities, education and expert knowledge by Club members through different seasons. The Shire will supply additional labour, materials and equipment for weed control and signage.
Aside from the Shire the project has the support of the North Central

Catchment Management Authority, the Department of Sustainability & Environment and Local Landcare.

Project objectives are:-

- To increase knowledge on the distribution of threatened species within the shire.
- To educate the community (and the council) on the importance of these sites.
- To enhance biodiversity and provide long term protection of threatened species.
- To put in place roadside conservation management strategies.

Biologically significant sites on roads known to have high conservation value will be specially targeted for threatened species listed under state or national law and assessments made for management actions to mitigate threats such as inappropriate grader or pipeline disturbance.

A works program will be drawn up and members are invited to participate in surveys, documentation and revegetation.

Chris Morris

Weed Spotters Wanted

To tackle potential new and emerging weeds more effectively, the Department of Primary Industry is developing a Weed Alert Rapid Response Plan for the State. One of its initiatives is to develop a network of weed spotters to report new weeds. Weeds might be found in paddocks, on roadsides, in National Parks, at nurseries or at the local fete or market.

To become a weed spotter, send your contact details to:
Kate Blood at DPI, PO Box7, Beaufort 3373 or email Kate.Blood@dpi.vic.gov.au

Film - Travelling Birds is Coming to the Theatre Royal at last. Screening Times: Oct 9.Th - 1 and 6 pm; 10 Fr. 11am; 11 Sat. 3pm; 12 Sun. 5pm 13 Mon. 1pm; 14 Tu. 11am and 8 pm; 15 Wed. 1 and 6 pm..

Articles, reports and observations can be left with Jill at Tonks Bros., Barkers Street, Castlemaine or sent to P.O.Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450. Articles need to be submitted by the 4th Thursday of the month.

Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Club.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club,
PO Box 324,
Castlemaine.
Incorporation #A0003010B

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme - October, 2003.

General meetings are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm on the second Friday of each month, except January.

Excursions are usually on the Saturday following the general meeting, and leave promptly at the times stated from The Octopus, opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on Total Fire Ban days.

Business meetings are held at 27 Doveton Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

NOTE October '03 business meeting will be at the Eco House in Mostyn St.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS

Wed. Oct. 1. ***Evening Walk (3) - Morgan's Track*** - off Fryerstown Rd. R. Piesse

Wed. Oct. 8. ***Evening Walk (4) – Pipeline Track*** - Barkers Creek. Ged Harris

Fri. Oct. 10. ***Wildlife and Biodiversity Issues of Western Victoria.*** Barry Clugston. Farmer and Chairman of Grampians Water. Also, ABC regional radio once a fortnight. UCA hall, 8pm.

Sat. Oct. 11. ***Mandurang.*** Leader, Max Stevens. Leave the Octopus at 1.30 pm.

Fri. 10 – Sun. 12. Oct. ***VFNCA Spring Campout '03*** – Cape Bridgewater

Wed. Oct. 15. ***Evening Walk (5)*** - Taradale. Leader: Penny Garnett

Fri. Nov. 14. ***Natural History, Outback.*** Trevor Blake. UCA hall, 8pm.

Sat. Nov. 15. ***Bendigo Sewerage Ponds.*** Leaave the Octopus at 1.30pm sharp. Leader: Chris Morris.

Sat. Dec. 6. ***BOCA Bird Challenge.*** Leaders: Ken and Maureen Dredge. Meet at the Octopus opposite the Motel at 8.15am for an 8.30 start. <u>It is essential that you contact Ken on 5470 6474 at least 3 days beforehand</u> if you intend to take part so that teams and transport, and half and one day excursions can be organised. The full rundown of needs will be published in the Nov. CN.

Fri. Dec. 12. ***Members and Visitors Night.*** UCA hall. 8.30pm

Sat. Dec. 13 *Wombat Res. or Tipperary Springs*. Details decided at the December meeting depending on weather etc.

Fri. Feb. 13 *AGM* Election of office bearers and Committee. Followed by *Local Geology* with Clive Willman. UCA hall, 8pm.

2003 Committee - C. Morris (President) ph. 9885 4221, J.Turnbull (VP and Grievance Officer) ph. 5474 3035, G. Broadway (Secretary) ph. 5472 2513, H. van Gemert (Treasurer) ph. 5472 1082, E. Perkins, R Mills (Newsletter Ed & Public Officer), G. Harris (Ass't Newsletter Editor), B. Maund, M. Oliver, R. Piesse and J. Cole.

Subscriptions for 2003

Ordinary membership: Single $22, Family $30

Pensioner or student: Single $19, Family $24

The subscription includes postage of the *Castlemaine Naturalist.*